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PROGRAM All Things Considered

STATION WETA Radio
NPR Network

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Shevchenko/Gorbachev

SUSAN STAMBERG: A prominent Soviet defector predicted today that the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new Communist Party leader will not change Soviet arms control policies. Arkady Shevchenko, a high-ranking Soviet diplomat for 22 years, broke with Moscow seven years ago and now lives in the United States. He testified today before a defense policy panel in the House of Representatives.

NPR's David Molpus reports.

DAVID MOLPUS: Shevchenko described Gorbachev as dynamic, charismatic, even charming, and very intelligent, a man who should project a far more favorable public image than his immediate predecessors, a man not to be underestimated. But the former Soviet official said Gorbachev is by no means all-powerful. Some Politburo members, he said, have more power in certain areas, especially Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

Shevchenko, who used to be an arms control adviser to the Foreign Minister, says Gromyko will dominate Soviet foreign policy and arms control policy.

ARKADY SHEVCHENKO: Gorbachev most likely concentrate, at this moment, all his efforts in consolidating his power within the party apparatus, in his putting his persons in the Central Committee, in the key position of the Central Committee of the Party. I can hardly see that Gorbachev even will devote too much attention to the forthcoming negotiations on arms control, because he has to deal with so many problems in the Soviet Union. And he trusts Gromyko. And it is Gromyko who become now unusually strong force in the Soviet Union.